

# *the* Water Column



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## Getting *Into* Maine's Lakes

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Welcome New Volunteers!!!

# Lake or Pond???

One of the most frequently asked questions posed of biologists in the Lake Assessment Section of Maine DEP, is “*what is the difference between a lake and a pond?*” About half of Maine’s 6,000 lakes and ponds that have been assigned a state identification number have been named, many having two or three names. At least thirty have one name with the word *lake* in it and the other with the word *pond*. For example, *Bryant Pond* is also known as *Lake Christopher* and **Dexter Pond** sports the name *Wassookeag Lake!* It is often these dual names that make folks wonder exactly where do we draw the line in Maine?

One classic distinction is that sunlight penetrates to the bottom of all areas of a pond in contrast to lakes, which have deep waters that receive no sunlight at all. Another is that ponds generally have small surface areas and lakes have large surfaces. In Maine the latter distinction totally breaks down when one considers that one of the three *Great Ponds* is over 8,800 acres and one of

the thirty-six *Long Ponds* is 2,500 acres!

So a combination of surface area and depth are considered from a technical perspective.

Some of Maine’s large and deep bodies of water are indisputably lakes. Others are ponds – small and shallow. But there is a transition between the two where the definition becomes fuzzy. If we held to the depth distinction, some ponds would become lakes mid-summer when algal populations limit light penetration to the bottom. The surface area distinction makes no sense for seven-acre waters that are 50 feet deep (like Maine’s kettle ponds), or for 400-acre waters that have emergent vegetation across their entire surface.

So to answer the question above: no definitive line exists between lakes and ponds. The one distinction that has any legal application is the designation of a body of water as a *Great Pond*. Maine state statues define lakes and ponds greater than ten acres in size as *Great Ponds*. If an impounded waterbody is greater than thirty acres in size it is also legally considered a *Great Pond*; impounded waters less than thirty acres that were greater than ten acres



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before being dammed are also *Great Ponds*.

Thus there is no exact technical distinction between lakes and ponds. All lakes and ponds provide critical habitat for other living creatures – aquatic macroinvertebrates, plankton, fish, wildlife and vegetation – and all need protection, so that clean fresh water continues to be one of Maine’s premier natural resources.

## Fall Fundraising Appeal

Keeping an eye on the health of Maine’s lakes involves the dedicated efforts of over 900 volunteers around the state who monitor and respond to threats facing our waters. It also takes significant financial resources to coordinate, collect, equip, and support those volunteers, and to track and publish their data.

Please consider supporting VLMP volunteers in these efforts by contributing to our Fall Appeal. Every donation contributes to ensuring the health and protection of Maine’s lakes.

## Web Updates

Check out the VLMP’s new website offerings:

- 2010 Secchi Data
- Native Plant Lists for your lake
-  New Facebook Page
- New *Meet the Monitor* Posts

